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The
NEW DEAL
and
AMERICAN INDIAN
TRIBALISM

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE INDIAN
REORGANIZATION ACT, 1934-45

by
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Certainly in American and European experience, factionalism has been closely associated with the concepts of civil liberties and democratic participation

Perhaps it was also fair to say, as one bureau leader did, that the full-bloods had only themselves to blame for not asserting their point of view more strongly by taking a more active part in tribal affairs and learning to play the game of politics, American style.⁵² On the other hand, the full-bloods could hardly be expected to take readily to political practices with which they had no prior acquaintance

The prevalence of factionalism stimulated or exacerbated by reorganization had some undeniable ill effects. Morris Opler found among the Mescalero Apaches that the men regarded widely as the most appropriate leaders were reluctant to run for the tribal council, not from indifference but because they "are alive enough to the realities of native sentiment to see the disadvantages of speaking boldly for a group who understand representation in a sense vastly different from that of the average white community. The candidate hesitates to become the surrogate of an electorate which sends him out with as many mental reservations."⁵³ Perhaps this attitude was peculiar to Apaches, certainly among other groups like the Sioux there was no reluctance to take strong public positions. But few, if any, of the tribal councilmen in these early years enjoyed the respect of many of their fellows, and the lack of support reduced their leverage in confrontations with the bureau over the limits of tribal authority.

On a more basic level of concern, Collier's offhand dismissal of factionalism, albeit realistic, seems rather strange. No doubt it was politic of him not to debate openly Congressman Peavey's conception of the aims of reorganization, but certainly Collier did not see them to be "raising the Indians up to the level of white communities." Indian communities differed from white communities, that was a central premise of Collier's approach to Indian affairs. Part of this difference arose from the fact, according to Collier, that Indian tribes had been divided traditionally, not into "partisan combat organizations," but rather into groups linked by shared needs and values. That situation no longer prevailed, but if the goal of the program was the restoration of individual integrity within a tribal context, the problem of factionalism could not be ignored or casually disregarded.

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PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL ORGANIZATION: COUNCILS VERSUS COMMUNITIES

What is a tribe? The Indian Reorganization Act did not seriously face this question, although the tribe was a central feature of the new program. In the last section of the act, tribe was defined as "any Indian tribe, organized band, pueblo or the Indians residing on one reservation." This definition was flexible but not necessarily helpful to administrators.

As we have discussed earlier, during the nineteenth century the tribe became the category most commonly used by white officials in distinguishing Indian groups. Tribes made treaties, ceded land claims, were awarded annuities, and ultimately were assigned to reservations. The American public read of warlike tribes like the Sioux, Comanches, and Apaches, while historians wrote of the exploits of the Iroquois and novelists of the "last of the Mohicans." When a reform movement repudiating assimilation emerged in the twentieth century, it was natural for the reformers to regard the tribe as the focus of the traditional Indian life whose restoration should be the goal of government policy.

But the meaning of tribe to most Indian groups differed markedly from the notions accepted by government representatives and the American public generally. The noted ethnologist A. L. Kroeber drew attention to this point in an influential essay published in 1955.

What are generally denominated tribes are really small nationalities, possessing essentially uniform speech and customs and an accompanying sense of likeness and like mindedness. The genuinely political units were smaller units—corresponding rather to what it is customary to loosely call “bands” or “villages.” They were de facto self-governing and it was they that each owned a particular territory rather than the nationality owned the over-all territory. Ordinarily the nationality, miscalled tribe, was an aggregate of miniature sovereign states normally friendly to one another.¹

To be sure, some tribes exhibited a greater degree of political integration than others. The Cherokees and Creeks in the Southeast, for example, and the member tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy had developed formal structures of tribal government during the historical period. Even among the relatively decentralized hunting and warrior tribes of the plains, some, notably the Crows and Cheyennes, had tribal councils which exercised more than nominal authority over their fellow tribesmen. But with a few exceptions such as these, Kroeber's proposition seems plausible.²

“The tribe,” according to a recent study, “is a constellation of communities and relations between communities.” A key point in this definition is the absence, in a tribe, of any formal institutions “specially constituted to maintain ‘law and order’ structurally separated from the underlying population and set above them.” Among “civilized” communities, “the right to control force has precipitated from the society at large to rest exclusively with the government”; in tribal systems the maintenance of order within and among communities instituting the tribe remains informal and the task of all the members of the society through the acceptance of customary relationships and patterns of individual and group behavior.³

This concept is not entirely satisfactory, since it implies the absence of any kind of legal institutions distinct from the kinship groups which form the basis of most aboriginal communities. As E. A. Hoebel has indicated, in most tribes there is a structure of law that applies to all tribesmen regardless of kinship affiliations, and there are the functional equivalents of courts to determine disputes and enforce decisions, they may not necessarily be tribal institutions, but they uphold those values that are the shared consensus of the tribe.⁴ Nevertheless, Marshall D. Sahlins's formulation provides a useful line of approach to the analysis of the relationship between traditional Indian communities and the tribal organizations established in the Indian New Deal.

The imposition of formal institutions of government upon tribal systems like those described by Kroeber might reinforce existing cultural tendencies toward “national” self-identification. At the same time, it could have the contrary effect of arousing tensions among communities which had hitherto coexisted in a state of relative autonomy. The fact that for more than a generation before tribal organization the Indians had been subjected to a policy intended to suppress any form of cultural identity whatever further complicated the situation. Had tribal organization been encouraged or even permitted during the 1880s, the integration of communities into the larger structure might have proceeded with little difficulty. But while forty-odd years of reservation life and assimilation had not eradicated Indian cultural identity, it had not strengthened the sense of tribalism either.

In these circumstances, the tribal governments established under the Indian Reorganization Act constituted a totally new and unfamiliar level of organization for many Indian groups. One major result of reorganization was that control of those elements of Indian life that had not been taken over earlier by white authorities now passed from the hands of the communities to institutions which were nominally representative of the Indian view, but with which the communities had little contact or sense of identification. Where the traditions of community control were still relatively strong, as was the case among some of the southwestern Indians, the establishment of tribal government was the occasion for much bickering over local autonomy, and tribal officials engaged in continuous struggles with their constituent communities over the scope of their powers.

Bureau administrators responsible for tribal organization were not unaware of these problems and were constantly seeking ways of better integrating the local communities into the new tribal system and ensuring that the tribal councils were genuinely representative bodies. But they also felt constrained by the wording of the law and the goals of the program as a whole, particularly the establishment of viable tribal economies, to make the tribe the focus of attention, to channel federal funds through the tribal government, and to plan and implement development projects with tribal officials. Only when they were faced with an immovably hostile tribal council or when the whole process of tribal organization had been stymied did federal officials work closely with community groups. By emphasizing the tribe, the Collier

administration in many cases created and sustained an essentially artificial institution in Indian life

This crucial point was made by Archie Phinney in 1942 in a critique of Ward Shepard's proposal for transferring major administrative responsibilities to the tribal governments as part of his plan for decentralization within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Phinney, a Nez Percé, had studied with Franz Boas before entering the bureau and serving as a field adviser in the Great Lakes region, where he worked primarily with the Chippewas of Minnesota and Wisconsin. After noting that for the Chippewas, as for many Indians of the Northern Plains, tribal unity had no relationship to the actual situation, Phinney went on to point out that the bureau had failed to recognize or exploit the potential for spontaneous and enduring participation at the community level.

A study of the relations between the elected representatives and their constituents will show a growing democratic centralism which kind of detachment can never lend itself to the creativity of wide community participation in tribal affairs. The efforts of the Indian Reorganization staff in the past years have been directed mainly toward the strengthening of tribal council government. But this achievement is empty of the result most needed—the reinforcement of community life. The basic problem is how to stimulate development of initiative and responsibility on the community level, within local groups, for only on this level, below the council, can there be any real Indian participation and any real exercise of whatever new powers the Indian Bureau may want to transfer to the Indian.⁵

Control of the process of tribal organization and economic development was not entirely in the hands of the bureau, although Collier and his aides proved skillful at devising ways around legal obstacles. The Wheeler-Howard Act specifically identified the tribe as the focus for organizational efforts and the recipient of any authority and money the federal government would be willing to cede to the Indians. The tribal council could negotiate with other governments, employ legal counsel, arrange for the tribe's incorporation, and so forth. The only provisions of the act that refer to Indians in other than tribal status are those authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to purchase lands for landless Indians and to appoint Indians to the bureau without regard to civil service laws, and the one making education loans available to individual Indians.

An amendment offered in the House version of the bill in 1934 would have permitted the incorporation of Indian groups below the tribal level, but it was removed from the final version.

Recognition that the deletion of this provision from the Wheeler-Howard Act was a mistake seems indicated by the fact that the Oklahoma and Alaska organization bills both allowed for the incorporation of Indians in villages and cooperatives. A substantial number of the constitutions for the larger tribes organized under the Wheeler-Howard Act authorized the tribal councils to charter economic organizations like livestock cooperatives or housing projects, but such groups did not have equal status with tribal corporations under the law, nor did they have direct access to federal funds.

Given the relatively open definition of tribe in the act, it might seem logical for the bureau to have encouraged communities to be designated as tribes where it appeared appropriate. That was done in Oklahoma under the Thomas-Rogers Act. In 1937, Morris Opler of the Applied Anthropology Staff submitted a report on the Creek Indians (part of the Five Civilized Tribes settled in eastern Oklahoma) which indicated historical and sociological reasons for organizing these Indians into chartered towns, the traditional center of Creek political life. Collier accepted his view and the Creeks were urged to follow that course.⁶ Similarly, in Alaska, villages became the basic unit of organization not only because this was the traditional pattern but also because the Indians themselves were reluctant to be grouped into tribes since that would entail the designation of reservations, limiting their mobility and their claims to Alaskan lands. When the Interior Department under the authority of the Alaska Reorganization Act did undertake to establish tribal reservations in 1944 and 1945, the Indians rejected three reservations and accepted six.⁷

Objections were raised within the bureau and the Interior Department to the fact that these localized organizations would have difficulty functioning effectively as economic entities because the resources available to any one community were simply not sufficient to support a tribal government and a development program. In the case of the Creek Indians of Oklahoma, F. L. Kirgis, the acting solicitor of the Interior Department, noted that the aim of the Thomas-Rogers Act was "the creation of organizations of Indians capable of handling common credit and land problems. It is obviously necessary that the Indians to be organized must be those with common problems—who can and will work together to effect a properly functioning unit."⁸ This criterion was applicable to tribal organizations at any level, and larger tribal entities

often failed to satisfy it. But it is noteworthy in the Creek case that in 1944, a Creek tribal council was established with representation from forty-four Creek towns and that it operated independently of the bureau's program.

Of the ninety-three tribal governments established under the Wheeler-Howard Act between 1935 and 1945, thirty-one could be characterized as representing constituencies small and cohesive enough to be considered communities. For the most part, these community organizations (which were given that title in eleven cases) were composed of scattered remnants of bands in areas like California, Nevada, Michigan, and Minnesota where there was virtually no remaining reservation land base, even in the form of allotments.⁹ Where a potential land base still existed on a reservation in the form of either tribal lands or allotted land held in trust, the bureau apparently preferred to encourage reservation-wide tribal organization.

Occasionally the question arose whether community groups could be organized under the act on reservations where tribal organization was possible. At the Yankton Subagency of the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, the process of tribal organization was delayed throughout 1935 by full-blood opposition to a proposed constitution. In 1936, a group of landless Indians at Yankton petitioned the bureau to be allowed to draw up their own constitution so that they could apply for loans from the revolving credit fund. Kenneth Meicklejohn of the Interior Department's legal staff ruled that it would be contrary to the intent of the Wheeler-Howard Act, since the landless Indians could not be considered a tribe different from the other Yankton Sioux.¹⁰ Similarly, at the Colville Agency the bureau discouraged efforts by both mixed-bloods and full-bloods to hold referenda excluding their rivals, even though such referenda were practicable since the two groups lived in separate sections of the reservation and could have been organized into two different "tribes." Again the rationale seems to have been that it would have obstructed future land consolidation programs as well as creating a bad precedent for other tribes wracked by factionalism.¹¹

Once tribal organizations were in operation, however, bureau officials proved more flexible on this issue. In 1936, a tribal council had been established on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah, bringing together three hitherto separate Ute bands that had disputed over allotted lands since the 1890s. By 1942, the bureau

was willing to admit that the experiment was not working and suggested that one of the bands, the Uncompahgre, be allowed to secede from the larger group and form its own tribal council.¹²

Simultaneously an alternative approach was recommended which would leave the existing tribal organization intact but amend the tribal constitution to give local communities the maximum authority possible, reducing the general powers of the tribal council. This approach became increasingly popular with local bureau officials responsible for tribal affairs as time went on and the weaknesses of the tribal council system became more apparent. This orientation toward community organization never became bureau policy, although it was tacitly accepted as necessary in situations in which there was no tribal tradition, as was generally the case with Indian groups in the Southwest. But only belatedly were the promptings of Oliver La Farge and Archie Phinney for a general and sustained effort to make the local community the focus of Indian economic and political rehabilitation given serious attention. By the time their view acquired influence with bureau leaders, money for such "nonessential" activities had diminished, while the tribal councils themselves, with aspiring Indian politicians, provided an additional obstacle.

Few of the Indian groups of the American Southwest, either nomadic, like the Apaches and Navajos, or settled agriculturalists like the Pimas, Papagos, and Pueblos, had any tradition of tribal organization. The Pueblos had formed an All-Pueblo Council in the seventeenth century to oppose the domination of Spain, but it had remained dormant thereafter until revived in the 1920s to oppose the Bursum bill and the Dance Order, an effort by the bureau to suppress traditional Indian religious ceremonies. Some other latecomer groups like the Comanches were developing an embryonic form of tribal organization at the time of white contact, with these exceptions the focus of organization among these Indians was the village or the band.

Within this framework the patterns of organization were quite intricate, although generally unknown to white observers except anthropologists and specialists in Indian affairs in the region. The Pueblos of the Rio Grande valley had perhaps the most complex form, with a religious leadership, the Caciques, superimposed over the civil government, nominating all officials and exercising the power of veto over their actions. A basically sedentary agricultural people, the Pueblos allotted farming rights to individuals while

retaining communal title to lands, and had (like most other village Indians of the Southwest) escaped allotment.¹³ The desert Pueblos—Laguna, Acoma, and Zuni in New Mexico, and Hopi in Arizona in the center of the larger Navajo Reservation—were if anything more remote from white influence and more village-oriented. Significantly, the All-Pueblo Council comprised the eastern, or Rio Grande, Pueblos, with little or no representation from the western groups. The interlinkages of kinship or clan groups with the distribution of religious and political control were much stronger in the western Pueblo communities.¹⁴

Another, even more isolated group, the Papagos, functioned with less formal systems of government. Located in the mountains and desert of south-central Arizona, the Papagos lived in villages which in fact constituted two separate settlements. During the summer rainy season they raised corn and other vegetables in the plain, retreating in winter to the hills to hunt, but retaining permanent houses and lands in each area. The original villages spawned "daughter villages" that held allegiance to their progenitors and kept aloof from other villages. Within this constellation of villages linked by kinship but no more formalized system of association, a council of men ruled, with a headman chosen to manage religious affairs and other routine civil matters.¹⁵

Most of the more nomadic groups of this region seem to have followed the same pattern in varying degrees. Bands had headmen, often senior members of the kinship group that made up the band, and there was little contact among bands, which in some cases spoke mutually unintelligible dialects. Indians in the Great Basin region had more rudimentary forms of organization, lacking clans or any form of association beyond the extended family unit.¹⁶ Until the coming of reservations they had no experience of sustained interaction, and on the reservations the existing groups were broken up.

Before 1934 the bureau had experimented with tribal organization of a sort, although generally in order to ease the burdens of local administrations rather than to instill any sense of tribal self-determination. As we have noted earlier, a council composed of the leaders of the different clans had been established on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in New Mexico around 1915, but it had broken up because of internal squabbling by 1920.¹⁷ At the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona, a business council had been set up by the agency superintendent about the same time,

and a vigorous Apache leader, Henry Chinn, had emerged as spokesman for the council. In 1923 the new superintendent, James Kitch, dissolved the council, apparently because he preferred to run the reservation without Indian interference. For the next decade the Chinn faction, constituting about 50 percent of the Indians, had petitioned the bureau to reestablish the council, but without effect, since Kitch's administration was regarded as effective and productive.¹⁸ The lines drawn in this clear-cut contest between Indians and administration were to carry over into the reorganization program.

Probably the most extensive, and most controversial, experiment with tribal organization in the Southwest before the New Deal occurred on the Navajo Reservation. Prior to 1923 there had been no Navajo tribal council, although superintendents at the various agencies would occasionally summon several headmen together to approve the leasing of mineral prospecting rights on Indian lands to a prospector or company that wanted legal standing in the event of a successful strike. In 1921 oil companies anticipating a possible bonanza on the Navajo lands urged the Interior Department, then under Albert B. Fall, to authorize the establishment of a Navajo tribal council for this purpose, and in 1923 the bureau initiated the creation of the first tribal organization in Navajo history, with one delegate from each of the six subagencies. Unlike earlier councils, this one was allowed to continue in operation, and the number of delegates was expanded, although the Interior Department retained the right of appointing delegates in the event that the Indians did not elect them.¹⁹

To Collier, this Navajo council was nothing more than a puppet government set up at the behest of would-be exploiters of the Indians to rubber-stamp the demands of Fall and his successors. In 1931 before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs he made that charge, expanding on it in 1934 during the hearings on the Wheeler-Howard bill, when he asserted that Fall "smashed the Navajo tribal government . . . he wiped it out and dictated a new Navajo tribal council . . . to turn over to him unlimited power of attorney to represent the tribe . . . Any American community that was at the mercy of such things would move out or rise in rebellion."²⁰

Collier's view of this situation has generally been accepted, but one recent historian, Lawrence Kelly, has argued that his criticisms were wrong on two counts: first, there had been no previous

rarely included all of the representatives, some of whom had to travel long distances the two delegates from Gila Band, which was more than one hundred miles from Sells Agency, had never attended the tribal council meetings. Some of the district representatives chose to stay away because of grievances against the whole program of centralization, and Marmon recommended continued delay in trying to get the Papagos to form a chartered tribal organization.⁴⁸ Part of the reason for the apparent efficiency of the council, it later developed, was the presence of an educated secretary-treasurer who was also head of the loan board and became the dominant figure, but was found to have been siphoning off funds.⁴⁹

The Indian New Deal had mixed results in promoting tribal unity. The IECW and other projects brought together villagers who had previously had little contact, and the district councils, although limited in powers, served the same function for village leaders. A bilingual Papago newspaper sought to instill a sense of shared Papago achievement by recounting tribal political and economic activities. Nevertheless, the village traditions remained strong. *District and tribal council representatives were regarded by their constituencies as messengers between the different levels of government rather than as spokesmen clothed with authority to act on behalf of the villages.* Resistance to coordinated range management and cooperative cattle marketing associations continued throughout the period.⁵⁰

In organizing the Indian groups of the Southwest, the bureau recognized the traditions of local village or band autonomy and made some effort to accommodate this orientation to the centralizing format of tribal economic programs, notably in the case of the Hopis. But the effort was limited, and even in the Hopi situation the tribal council was unable to meet the requirement that it represent Indian communities and at the same time integrate community interests into a tribal economic and political system. The councils worked hard to establish themselves in the minds of bureau officials and their own people as the legitimate spokesmen for a tribal point of view, and in general Collier and his associates felt that the southwestern councils were among the best products of the Indian Reorganization Act. Many Indians, however, saw them, not necessarily accurately, as only another tier of alien officials, at best ineffective, and at worst the red puppets of white bureaucracy.

In the Southwest and the Great Basin, Indian groups were traditionally organized into villages or bands, and this pattern held also for the Indians of the Northern Plains. Some, like the Mandans and Arikaras, were settled in agricultural villages and supplemented their economy with hunting and trading, while others, like the Teton Sioux and Cheyennes, were basically buffalo hunters and traveled in small bands.⁵¹ During the period of white contact, however, some of these groups, notably the Northern Cheyennes and the Crows, had developed a more cohesive tribal organization that exercised a degree of control over the members of the constituent bands.

The Northern Cheyennes of Montana had one of the more elaborate of these tribal structures. A council of forty-four chiefs was chosen every ten years and sat in judgment of disputes among tribesmen and made decisions relating to the general welfare of the tribe, such as the time and place for the annual buffalo hunt. To enforce decisions there were six military societies, which drew their members from different bands. The leaders of these societies were elected by the members, and no chief of a society could simultaneously be a member of the council of forty-four. In addition to policing the annual hunt and fighting battles with rival tribes, the military societies tended to reinforce the unity of the Cheyennes by suppressing would-be secessionist bands and factions, and thus acted as one of the strongest elements binding the tribe together.⁵²

The Cheyennes were unusual in their degree of tribal organization. Other plains tribes exhibited similar features but had not integrated them to that extent. The Crows, Mandans, and Teton Sioux had military societies which served essentially the same function as those of the Cheyennes, but the tribal council, if one existed, met only sporadically and had no well-defined powers. Among the Crows the chief of the military society might also be chief of a band, but the duties of the societies extended only to policing the hunts and fighting other Indians.⁵³ Other groups like the Comanches lacked even this unifying element and seem to have been held together mainly by the need for mutual assistance in fighting other Indians. Their leaders, civil and military, were not chosen in any formal way but acquired temporary influence through persuasion and prestige. For the most part they operated only at the band or community level.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, those groups were all moving toward a form and scale of organization similar

to that of the Cheyennes during the historical period, variations among their political systems were a matter of degree and the ancient tradition of village autonomy typical of the southwestern Indians did not develop. The Indians of the Northern Plains in the nineteenth century were in a state of transition to a more formal system of tribalism.

The imposition of white domination halted these processes. The attempt to force assimilation on Indians by downgrading their traditional chiefs and parceling out their lands in individual allotments failed, but it still eradicated vestiges of tribal unity except among those Indians like the Cheyennes who had developed an integrated internal structure. Strong leaders like Red Cloud and Spotted Tail of the Sioux held their followers together for a time by force of personality, but by the second generation of reservation life only a few older full-bloods recalled the political traditions of earlier days.

The bureau had further impinged upon tribal integrity and unity by its policies of settlement on reservations in the plains. Some reservations had originally been established for the exclusive use of single Indian groups but subsequently became receptacles for remnants of smaller groups who had nowhere else to go. That was the case at the Flathead Reservation in Montana, which had been established in 1855 under the Hell Gate Treaty for the Flathead, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreille Indians, who were collectively designated the Flathead nation for treaty purposes although they had constituted different groups in the past. Beginning in 1889 the Flathead Reservation was opened for settlement by residues of other, smaller groups, and the entire reservation was subsequently allotted.⁵⁵ The Fort Belknap Reservation was established for the Gros Ventres, a branch of the Blackfeet, in 1855, but in 1874 it was opened to the Assiniboins under the terms of an 1868 treaty that the Gros Ventres regarded as illegitimate. Later, allotment broke up the unity of both tribes although they remained hostile toward each other.⁵⁶ Similarly, in Oklahoma the Kiowa Reservation, established in 1867 under the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, included Comanches and, later, Plains Apaches. The three groups remained completely apart and the reservation was allotted in 1900.⁵⁷

Other reservations were set aside by government decree rather than treaty, and became dumping grounds for unrelated groups. At Fort Berthold in North Dakota, J. H. Holst noted that the

tribes assembled there, the Mandans, Arikaras, and Hidatsas, were unrelated and their "main reason for proximity in the past had been defense against the Sioux." While their historical contacts may have been greater than Holst was aware, they spoke no mutual language, and there was little intermarriage among them.⁵⁸ A Montana reservation, Rocky Boy's, was established specifically for remnants of former tribes or bands who had nowhere else to go.

During the 1920s most of the plains reservations, on orders from Washington, set up business committees to represent tribes for purposes of legal transactions such as leasing tribal lands and mineral rights. The councils also presumably served as liaisons between the local officials and the Indians, but there were no uniform procedures for the selection of committee members. Sometimes they were simply hand-picked by the superintendent, in other cases an effort was made to establish a representative electoral system based on administrative districts, but the districts rarely corresponded to existing Indian communities. The functions of these committees were likewise ill-defined and they existed almost entirely at the whim of the superintendent. Few, if any, records were kept of their proceedings, and when the bureau sent out a circular in 1934 requesting information from the agents about the history of tribal organization on their reservations, most of the responses were pieced together from interviews with Indians and long-term agency employees.

Collier and his associates were well aware of the destructive effects that allotment and the bureau policy of shared reservations had on tribal integrity among the plains Indians. The program of land consolidation in the Wheeler-Howard Act was based on the premise that political organization of the tribes would be ineffectual without the establishment of an adequate economic base. At the same time, bureau administrators viewed political and economic reorganization as concurrent processes and felt impelled to promote and sustain tribal governments despite the absence of tribal unity on many of the reservations.

One of the first tribal councils to be established under the Reorganization Act was that of the confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes (which included Pend d'Oreilles and other smaller groups) on the Flathead Reservation in Montana in 1935. Representation was based on districts which corresponded roughly with the divisions among tribal groups on the reservation. On the